Dual Agency: A Thomistic Account of Providence and Human Freedom

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ABSTRACT

There are three accounts of divine providence: the Thomistic-Augustinian account, the Molinist account, and the open theist account. Of the three, the Thomistic account has received relatively little attention in recent years, largely because it is been understood to be a form of theological compatibilism or soft determinism, and compatibilism has been subject to powerful objections, most notably those of van Inwagen. In fact, it is possible for a Thomistic account to be robustly incompatibilist and indeterministic, much more so than its Molinist rival. By combining recent developments in the metaphysics of causation with the fertile suggestions of Oxford theologian Austin Farrer, I develop a Thomistic account of providence and freedom that respects the reality of human freedom and provides an adequate foundation for a free will theodicy.

Dual Agency: A Thomistic Account of Providence and Human Freedom

There are, roughly speaking, three accounts of Divine Providence among Christians. Thomas Flint discussed two of these in his 1988 paper, "Two Accounts of Divine Providence,"[1] namely, the Augustinian-Thomistic account and the Molinist account. For the third account , I will use the now popular term, "open theism". Most often, the distinction between these three is drawn in terms of the scope and basis of God's knowledge of certain conditionals: the open, subjunctive or counterfactual conditionals concerning human freedom, or other forms of creaturely autonomous and undetermined action. Here are some familiar sorts of examples of these conditionals: Would President Bush freely accept a bribe under certain circumstances? Would Adam have freely eaten the forbidden fruit had it been a different color?

The Thomist is supposed to believe that God knows the answers to these sorts of conditional questions and that He knows them by having decided Himself what the answers should be. The Molinist believes that God knows the answers to all these questions by a special kind of knowledge, Middle Knowledge, by which He knows their contingent truth or falsity without having decided which they shall be himself. The open

[1] Thomas P. Flint, "Two Accounts of Providence," in *Divine and Human Action*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988), pp. 147-181.

theist denies that God knows the answers to all such questions, because he doubts that there are, in most cases, any corresponding facts to be known.

I think, however, that the three accounts can be more usefully and more accurately distinguished by looking at a different issue: namely, how does God know the actual shape of creaturely free actions? Each account gives a very different answer to this question. According the Thomist, God knows what creatures are actually doing by what Elizabeth Anscombe called a form of executive self-knowledge: He knows what we are doing by actively willing that we should do what we are doing. The Molinist holds that God knows what we are doing by putting together two separate pieces of knowledge: first, by already (somehow or other) knowing the antecedent circumstances, and second, by applying His Middle Knowledge of what we would freely do under those very circumstances. To be perfectly accurate, I should add that, for the Molinist, God's executive self-knowledge is also involved, because God must also know that He is not directly intervening in a particular case and superceding the creature's free choice.

In the case of the open theist, I suppose that the picture is that God's omniscience involves something like a perfect sensory perception of all actual occurrences. God's knowledge of our present actions is passive or reactive and comes into being concurrently with the actions themselves. An open theist might be attracted to something like Newton's idea of space as the "sensorium" of God, a gigantic sense membrane that immediately and infallibly registers every this-worldly state and event. God's knowledge of the actual world would be analogous to our own sense perception, shorn of its

limitations and imperfections – fallibility, liability to illusion, time lag, perspective, influence of the medium, and so on.

I suppose a Thomist or a Molinist could also attribute such a quasi-sensory capacity to God, but there would be no need for them to do so. Adding such a mode of knowledge to God would mean that God's knowledge of the actual world was over-determined.

Assuming that there is no such over-determination, there is an interesting observation to be made here: the Molinist God is reliant upon deductive reasoning, especially on modus ponens applied to subjunctive conditionals, in a way that neither the Thomist nor the open-theist God is. In order to know what's going on, the Molinist God must combine his middle knowledge of certain conditionals with his executive knowledge of the truth of their antecedents, and then he must apply modus ponens to reach the correct conclusions. Neither the Thomist God nor the open God need rely on such reasoning: He gains knowledge of each creaturely fact directly.

There are a number of motivations for each of the three positions. An important motivation for the Thomistic position is a concern to preserve the doctrine of the simplicity of God, as well as the closely related doctrine of the impassivity of God. For the Thomist, God has essentially one mode of knowing: that of executive self-knowledge. For each contingent fact that p, God knows that p because God wills that p. Thus, the Thomist can assert that, in the final analysis, God's knowledge and God's will (that is, His faculty of knowing and His faculty of willing) are one and the same.

Now, it might seem that God's knowledge of necessary truths could pose a problem for the Thomist. Suppose that it is necessarily the case that 2+2=4. Surely God doesn't know that 2+2=4 because He wills that it be so. He couldn't freely will that 2+2=4 if it is impossible for 2+2 to be anything but 4. Still, this difficulty can be overcome. There's really no harm in saying that God wills that 2+2=4, so long as add that God necessarily wills that it be so. We shouldn't say, in such a case, that God freely wills that 2+2 be 4, if God had no real alternative to so willing. But the distinction between God's free will and let's say God's natural will is a distinction grounded in a difference in the objects of God's will (contingent in one case, necessary in the other), and this doesn't seem to require any intrinsic difference in God's faculty of willing, so the doctrine of simplicity seems secure.

The doctrine of divine impassivity is also a motivation for the Thomistic position. This is the claim that God's relation to the creature is always one of cause-to-effect and never effect-to-cause, that God is never affected by the creature, at least, not strictly speaking. Anything that might be described as an effect upon God of our actions, such as God's hearing our prayers, or being pleased or displeased by our conduct, must, according to this doctrine, be ultimately cashed out in terms of God's own self-directed activity. When God answers a creature's prayer, the whole complex of prayer-and-answer is simply a special kind of Divine activity.

If God is impassive, then of course the sort of Newtonian sense perception hypothesized by the open theist is impossible, since it straightforwardly involves God's being directly affected by creaturely activity.

What about Molinist Middle Knowledge? Is this compatible with the doctrine of impassivity? Is God essentially active or passive in His middle knowing of the conditionals of creaturely freedom? It's important for the Molinist that the truth values of these conditionals not be up to God, so that it was not up to God what Adam would freely do in the garden, or what Bush would freely do in response to a bribe. This suggests that God is essentially passive in His middle knowledge, although I am not sure that this is true. Could God in some way be the cause of the truth-value of the conditionals, could it even be the case that the truth-values of the conditionals are shaped by God's activity of willing (and it would have to be God's free will in this case, since the conditionals are contingently true or false), and yet these truth-values not be "up to God" in the relevant sense? I'm not sure what to say, so I'm simply going to stipulate that, for what I am going to call the Molinist position, God is passive or receptive in His middle knowing. My justification for the stipulation is this: if a Molinist holds that God is purely active in His middle knowing, then the distinction between this kind of Molinism and Thomism becomes very difficult to draw. So, I'll simply lump any such active-knowing Molinists in with the Thomists (for the purposes of paper).

So, the Thomist position is at least in part motivated by concerns about divine simplicity and impassivity. But what motivates those concerns? Many prominent Christian

philosophers (e.g., Alvin Platinga[2]) have argued that Christian theists have no need for such doctrines, and that divine simplicity in particular borders on incoherency (especially when one says things like: God is identical to His own existence, and God and His existence are identical with His essence, His goodness, His wisdom, His power, and so on). The doctrines have been defended ably by others, especially Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann,[3] and I don't propose to try to settle the dispute here and now. I'm unsure what to say in the end, but I would prefer to keep my options open. Other things being equal, I would prefer a theory of divine providence that is at least compatible with the doctrines of simplicity and impassivity, and only the Thomistic theory achieves that goal.

Why do I want to keep my options open? To me, the most significant factor is my relatively new-found enthusiasm for the Thomistic cosmological argument.[4] We can, I hold, demonstrate the existence of an absolutely necessary being. I'm not sure about exactly what absolute necessity implies, but I suspect that it may imply the existence of an absolutely simple and absolutely active being. So, until that is fully resolved, I prefer to keep my options on divine simplicity open. Therefore, I would like to focus our attention now on the Thomistic account of providence and see if it might be a defensible position.

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[2] Does God have a Nature? (Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1980).

[3] Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Absolute Simplicity," *Faith and Philosophy* 2(1985):353-382.

[4] See my "A New Look at the Cosmological Argument", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34(1997):193-212; and "Defeasible Reasoning, Special Pleading and the Cosmological Argument: A Reply to Oddy", *Faith and Philosophy* 18(2001):192-203.

At first glance, the Thomistic account of providence is the least attractive of the three, for a number of reasons, two of which are most important. First, it makes God the author of sin and seems to cut off any hope of a free-will defense against the atheological argument from evil. Second, it seems to involve a kind of theological determinism. I'm convinced that determinism is incompatible with freedom and responsibility, primarily for the reasons Peter Van Inwagen has articulated,[5] and human responsibility is a non-negotiable doctrine for Christians, so any kind of determinism would seem to be beyond the pale.

In this paper, I'm going to take up primarily the question of determinism, although I will have a few sketchy remarks near the end about how I think a Thomist can have as good (or almost as good) a free-will defense against the argument from evil as the open theist does. Now, as I said, it would seem at first glance that the Thomist's position is a deterministic one, while the Molinist and the open theist hold indeterministic positions. There's no question about the indeterministic nature of open theism: that couldn't be clearer. However, I think our first impressions about the other two positions are mistaken. I'm going to argue that the Thomistic position is, or at least can be, a resolutely indeterministic position, while the Molinist position is in fact a covert form of determinism.

Let me start with the claim that Molinism is a form of determinism, since this has already been argued by a number of critics of Molinism, like William Hasker and Robert M.

[5] *An Essay on Free Will* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1982).

Adams: I'm not going to say anything original here. I'll just rehearse the argument briefly.[6] Here's what I mean by determinism: that, for each human action, all of the facts causally prior to that action together necessitate it. I will suppose that corresponding to each true subjunctive conditional is a conditional fact. I'll call these Middle Facts. Middle Facts are the objects of God's Middle Knowledge. Some Middle Facts involve merely possible actions, some even actions of merely possible people, but other middle facts concern real actions of real people. There's a middle fact concerning what Adam would do in the actual historical circumstances of the garden of Eden. The corresponding subjunctive conditional has both a true antecedent and a true consequent. It was God's knowledge of this particular Middle Fact that enabled God to know, and even to anticipate, Adam's actual choice.

The crucial issue is this: is a Middle Fact about some actual action causally prior to that action? Was the Middle Fact about what Adam would choose in the Garden causally prior to his actual choice? Suppose that Bush will be offered a bribe next year. Is the middle fact about what he would do under such circumstances causally prior to his actual, future refusal? It's hard for me to see how the Molinist can avoid answering that these middle facts are causally prior to the corresponding actual choices. God knew all these middle facts before creating anything at all. I'm assuming that my Molinist believes God to be passive or receptive in His middle knowing: so the middle fact that God knows

[6] Robert M. Adams, "An Anti-Molinist Argument," in Philosophical Perspectives 5: Philosophy of Religion, edited by James E. Tomberlin (Ridgeview, Atascadero, 1991), pp. 343-353; William Hasker, "A New Anti-Molinist Argument," Religious Studies 35(1999):291-297.

somehow impressed itself upon God's mind. It follows then, that all such middle facts are causally prior to all actual events of post-creation history, including the human actions they concern.

Take a particular free action, like Bush's freely rejecting the bribe next year. Bush will find himself in circumstances C, including the offer of a bribe. These circumstances, everyone would agree, are causally prior to Bush's choice. Let's suppose that God will not interfere, that He will allow Bush to act autonomously. This divine forbearance is also, I think, causally prior to Bush's action. There is, I've argued, a middle fact corresponding to the following true subjunctive conditional:

(1) If Bush were in circumstances C, and God were to forebear from interfering, Bush would reject the bribe.

The middle fact corresponding to (1), let's call it F1, is causally prior to Bush's action as well. So, the totality of facts causally prior to Bush's refusal includes F1, C, and the fact of God's forbearance. Together these facts logically entail (by subjunctive modus ponens) that Bush will refuse the bribe. Hence, they jointly necessitate that he do so. Thus, Bush's refusal, and all human choices, are necessitated by causally prior conditions, conditions over which the human agent had no control at the point of action.

In his 1999 paper, "A New Anti-Anti-Molinist Argument", [7] Flint argues that the middle facts are under our voluntary control, despite the fact that they are causally prior to our actions. Here the Molinist faces a dilemma: he must either (I) postulate causal loops, in which our actions are prior to the Middle facts, which are prior in turn to our actions, or (II) postulate some kind of voluntary "control" that does not require any causal priority.

The first horn of the dilemma, causal loops, exacts a heavy price. First of all, causal loops are very bad things, especially if you are a fan, as I am, of the cosmological argument. But, in any case, I don't see how this helps, since the universe remains deterministic, albeit loopy, on this version of Molinism.

At a colloquium at Notre Dame in January, 2002, Flint rejected the first horn of the dilemma, rejecting the possibility of causal loops. However, the second horn is no more promising for the Molinist who aspires to be an incompatibilist. If Flint defends our voluntary control over middle facts by means of a counterfactual –conditional analysis of control, making use of conditionals that are causal "back-trackers", then his account of freedom is indistinguishable from that of many compatibilists. Compatibilists can defend human freedom in a deterministic world by supposing that the past would have been different, had we chosen differently, so long as he is allowed to evaluate this conditional in a "back-tracking" way, hypothetically altering the fact even though the past is causally prior to our choice. Such back-tracking is wildly implausible, and conditionals interpreted in this way can secure only a very weak notion of freedom or voluntary

[7] "A New Anti-Anti-Molinist Argument," *Religious Studies* 35(1999):299-305.

control, one so weak that van Inwagen's transfer argument does not apply. Molinists who, like Flint, embrace such an analysis of freedom are simply compatibilists of a kind.

So, if like me, you abhor both causal loops and compatibilism, Molinism would seem to be ruled out. Too bad, because in many respects its an attractive position.

Now, let's turn to my main concern, which is to show that a Thomist can indeed be an indeterminist, contrary to first impressions. You might think that my own argument against the indeterministic Molinist can be turned on me. The Thomist holds that for every contingent fact F, God's knowing that F holds consists in God's willing that F should hold, and this includes facts about human free actions. Consider the following two propositions:

(2) Adam freely chooses to eat the forbidden fruit.
(3) God wills that Adam freely choose to eat the forbidden fruit.

I'm using a narrative present tense here, because I don't think it matters that this action occurred in the past rather than being in the present. Thomists certainly believe that God is essentially omnipotent, so the truth of (3) necessitates the truth of (2). Thus, it would seem, determinism holds, since Adam's choice was necessitated by the causally prior fact corresponding to (3).

But, wait. That's much too fast. How do we know that (3) is causally prior to (2)?

Well, one might say, surely you can't mean to tell us that (2) is causally prior to (3)! Surely Adam wasn't in control of God's will. Adam couldn't have made God will as He did according to (3). No, of course I can't say that, especially not since I'm assuming that the doctrine of divine impassivity is a major motivation for the Thomist position.

However, there is a third option: that neither (2) nor (3) is causally prior to the other.

But, you may well ask, how could that be? If neither is prior to the other, then there can be no direct causal connection between the two. How then do we explain the correlation between (2) and (3)? How do we explain the fact that every time God wills something, His will is done, and the fact (which a Thomist will accept) that every contingent fact occurs in accordance with God's will. This surely can't be a massive coincidence!

So, how can we explain the correlation? Our options are getting fewer and fewer. Could there be a common cause, some third thing that made Adam act as he did and made God will as He did. No, of course not. That wouldn't sit well with divine impassivity either.

So, no direct causal connection, no common cause, no coincidence. What's left? Only one thing, as far as I can see. Identity. What if the truth-maker of (2) and the truth-maker of (3) are one and the same thing (fact, situation, state of affairs, or what have you)? Then, no coincidence, and no causal connection, since causation can only link "separate

existences" (Hume). This was practically the only thing Hume said about causation that was actually true, but it was an important observation.

How could the truth-makers of (2) and (3) be identical? Again, this would seem at first glance to be an absurd claim. Well, let me see if I can soften you up a bit. I'll help myself to a couple abbreviations. I'll use GTW to stand for 'God wills that', which I'll use as a sentential operator in a second-order language. I'll use the familiar box necessity.

For Thomists, God exists of necessity and is omnipotent of necessity. Moreover, it is also a matter of necessity that every fact whatsoever corresponds to God's will. God by nature wills all the necessary truths (as I suggested above), and no contingent fact could hold apart from God's willing it (or, least, willing a bunch of things that necessitate it).

A brief parenthesis. The GTW context is a hyper-intensional one. Lots of substitutions will fail within the GTW context. God might will that p, and p might be necessarily equivalent to q, and yet God might not will that q. Moreover, God might will that p and will that q, but not will that (p&q). But, having recognized this fact, I'm going to go ahead and ignore it, because I won't be dealing with arbitrary propositions here, but only with propositions that correspond to fairly simple, coherent facts.

So, having made that caveat, let me oversimplify by saying that the Thomist is committed to something like (4):

(4) $\forall p (p \leftrightarrow GWT(p))$

That is, necessarily, for all p, p if and only if God wills that p.

Given (4), (2) and (3) are modally inseparable. They necessitate each other. There is no possible world in which (2) is true without (3) being true, and vice versa. This is at least an important necessary condition for the truth-makers of (2) and (3) being identical, but it's not sufficient by itself. For example, consider the truth-makers of propositions 5 and 6:

(5) Triangle ABC is equilateral.
(6) Triangle ABC is equiangular.

Or, assuming that it is a matter of metaphysical necessity that those creatures that naturally have kidneys and hearts have kidneys and hearts, consider (7) and (8):

(7) Lassie has kidneys naturally.
(8) Lassie has a heart naturally.

It may be that (5) and (6) are necessarily equivalent, and that (7) and (8) are likewise necessarily equivalent, and, yet, the truth-makers in the two cases are distinct. In the case of (5),the truth-maker has something to do with the measure of the sides, while in (6), it

has nothing to do with the length of the sides but rather to do with measure of the interior angles. Similarly, the truth-maker of (7) has to do with kidneys and not hearts, and the truth-maker of (8) with hearts and not kidneys.

Could something similar be going on in the case of (2) and (3)? After all, (3) seems to involve God and His will in a way that (2) does not. However, this superficial difference between the two sentences may not be as significant as the differences that appeared in (5) through (8). It is not implausible for a theist to embrace some form of the doctrine of divine immanence, and one way (perhaps the best way) to cash out this doctrine is to assert something like (9):

(9) Every this-worldly truth-maker includes God and His creating and sustaining will.

Consequently, not only is it the case that every world in which (2) is true is a world in which (3) is true, and vice versa, but every truth-maker of (2) is a truth-maker of (3), and vice versa. Therefore, the minimal actual truth-maker of (2) is identical to the minimal actual truth-maker of (3).

Let's call the claim that the truth-makers of (2) and (3), and by analogy, the truth-makers for all corresponding pairs of propositions for all human actions, are identical the Identity Hypothesis.

My reference to truth-makers is dispensable scaffolding for the argument. If you are skeptical about Australian ontologies, you can reconstruct this hypothesis in terms of a relation of causal equivalence between propositions. Propositions p and q are causally equivalent just in case anything that is causally prior to one is causally prior to the other, and anything that is causally posterior to one is causally posterior to the other. Causally equivalent propositions occupy the same node in the network of causal explanations. Put in these terms, the Identity Hypothesis is simply the claim that the propositions expressed by (2) and (3) are causally equivalent. So construed, my argument is very similar in structure to Ted Warfield's argument in his 1997 paper, "Foreknowledge and Human Freedom are Compatible."[8] Warfield argued that, for future contingent propositions p, the fact that p and the fact that God knows that p are both "soft" facts about the future, based upon an equivalency thesis similar to the one I've advanced about (2) and (3).

I've given at least some reason for thinking the Identity Hypothesis to be true, and I'd like to spend the remainder of this paper exploring about what would follow from it.

First of all, if we assume that God's will is free, that He is not determined to will in one way or another by causally prior conditions, then it follows that determinism is false: that is, that human actions are not necessitated by causally prior conditions. Our freedom rides piggyback on God's freedom: our choices are not pre-determined because His will concerning our choices is not pre-determined. If the truth-maker of (3) is not fixed by

[8] *Nous* 31(1997):80-86.

causally prior conditions, then neither is the truth-maker of (2), since they are one and the same.

One might question whether God's will is really free in the first place. Philosophers like Leibniz and Jonathan Edwards have believed that God's will was necessitated (in some sense) by the causally prior condition of God's understanding and knowledge. Alternatively, one might suppose that although God's will was originally free, He has at some remote time in the past, perhaps prior to the creation itself, tied His own hands by lashing himself, like Odysseus, to an absolutely complete set of ordinances, an exhaustive plan about the entire future course of history.

If either of these are the case – predetermination of God's will either by His natural knowledge or by exhaustive advance planning – then the Thomist position would indeed be a deterministic one. However, I don't see any good reason why the Thomist should accept either of these ideas. I am doubtful that there is such a thing as the best possible world, and even if there were, I agree with Robert M. Adams that God need not have actualized it, and the idea that God has already formed a complete plan for the future of history is based on a mistaken inference from belief in meticulous providence. Since, on the Thomist view, God faces no external constraints or obstacles, there is no need for Him to engage in forecasting and planning. On this view, meticulous providence is compatible with Divine spontaneity. This is not to say that God never indulges in advance planning, but only that any such plans are highly incomplete, leaving plenty of room for contingency.

So, for a typical this-worldly, contingent fact that p, neither that p nor that God wills that p are pre-determined. However, is this kind of indeterminism enough? Does it preserve human freedom and responsibility? After all, what God wills cannot be up to Adam, so neither can Adam's action be up to Adam, since God's willing what Adam should do and Adam's doing it are one and the same thing.

However, I think this conclusion is too hasty. Let's start on the other end. Adam's action must be up to Adam, and, so, God's willing that Adam eat the fruit must also be up to Adam. But, isn't it absurd, even blasphemous, to think that what God wills could be up to Adam and not to God? Yes, it would, but I didn't say that what God wills was up to Adam and not to God: I only said that it was up to Adam. To get the further result that it is not up to God, we would have to assume a principle of exclusion: if a concrete fact (truth-maker) is up to one agent, it cannot also be up to any distinct agent. I don't think this principle is correct, at least not in this instance. I want to say that both (2) and (3) are both up to Adam and up to God.

We are going to have to dig a little deeper into precisely what it means for something to be up to someone. I like Timothy O'Connor's view on this in *Persons and Causes*,[9] in which he argues that the simplest and best version of the van Inwagen transfer argument is one in which a fact is up to an agent just in case the agent could do something that would make it the case that the fact might not obtain, and the agent could do something

[9] Oxford University Press, New York, 2000.

that would make it the case that the fact might obtain. This is a pretty weak sense of up-to-ness, but it does do the job it needs to do in a van-Inwagen-ish argument for incompatibilism. On O'Connor's definition, the exclusion principle doesn't hold: it's quite possible for some fact to be jointly up to several distinct agents. For example, the Fall of mankind was up to Adam and up to Eve, and any sort of joint or cooperative action is going to be up to all of the participants.

To have a plausible basis for an exclusion principle, we must replace the black-and-white, all-or-nothing issue of up-to/not-up-to an agent with a graduated notion of degree of control. Then, I think it is plausible to suppose that the sum of the degrees of control over a fact held by distinct agents cannot sum to a degree greater than 100%. So, if Adam's degree of control over the fall was 60%, Eve's degree of control cannot exceed 40%, and vice versa.

Now we can't say of (2) and (3) that God's degree of control is anything short of 100%. It would be absurd, I think , to say that God's degree of control over his own will was something like 99%,with the remaining 1% degree of control held by Adam, as though God's actual willing were a joint action somehow negotiated by Adam and God together. So, I have to claim that the graduated exclusion principle simply doesn't hold when one of the agents is God and the other is a creature. I want to say that both God and Adam have 100% control over the relevant fact. It is plausible to say that, where the Identity Hypothesis holds, the exclusion principle does not.

By way of contrast, let's look at a case where the Identity Hypothesis does not hold: the responsibility of Iago and of Othello for Desdemona's death in Shakespeare's play. Consider the truth-makers for (10) and (11):

(10) Iago willed that Othello kill Desdemona.

(11) Othello killed Desdemona.

The truth-maker for (10) is not identical to that of (11), since Iago is not omnipotent, nor is his activity immanent throughout creation. Iago's degree of control over (10) is, let's say, 100%, and Othello's degree of control over (10) is 0. What about (11)? Presumably, Iago's degree of control over (11) is much less than 100%, with Othello holding some positive degree of control over (11). Iago's degree of control over (10) and (11) can be different because (10) and (11) have different truth-makers, and similarly Othello has different degrees of control over the two facts.

However, when we turn to (2) and (3), we find that the Identity Hypothesis makes it impossible that God should have different degrees of control over the two corresponding facts, and ditto for Adam. In such a case, each agent can have a 100% degree of control over the single fact, making for what I call "dual agency", as opposed to the "joint agency" of Adam and Eve, or Iago and Othello.

In cases of Creator/creature dual agency, there is an asymmetry in the roles of the two agents. God wills what Adam does; Adam does not will what God does, or, if Adam

does will that God should do something or other, this has nothing whatsoever to do with God's actions. This asymmetry does give a certain primacy to God over Adam, but it is not obvious that this asymmetry is not consistent with a coequal and coextensive responsibility for the action on the part of Adam and God.

Does this make God the author of sin? Yes, in a sense it does. However, although there is coequal responsibility for the existence of sin, it does not follow that there is coequal blame for sin. Blame attaches to actions, and actions are characterized by intentions. Although God and Adam bear coequal responsibility for the truth of (2) and of (3), they perform quite different actions. Adam intentionally eats a fruit; God does not eat a fruit. Adam knowingly breaks a divine command; God does not break one of his own commands. God commanded that Adam should not eat the fruit; He did not command that He should not will that Adam should eat the fruit. Dual agency is consistent with the two agents' performing very different actions with different intentions and different moral qualities. The Biblical locus classicus for this sort of dual agency is the story of Joseph in Genesis, especially Genesis 50:20, where Joseph says, "You intended it for evil, but God intended it for good", the "it" being the brothers' selling of Joseph into slavery in Egypt. God and Joseph's brothers bear coequal responsibility for the event, but moral blame attaches only to Joseph's brothers.

Finally, let me turn for the remaining few minutes to the Free Will Defense. It would seem that the Thomist can't use it, for what could prevent God from willing a sin-free world, a world in which humans are always perfectly righteous? What prevents this is, as

always, the fact that righteousness requires human freedom, and human freedom necessitates the real possibility of sin.

I am going to assume that God is holy and righteous by nature, and not merely contingently. However, I am also going to assume that for human beings to be righteous, we must be righteous freely, and that means, at least at some point and for normal human beings, contingently. I guess there is some tension between those two assumptions, but they both seem right to me, and I don't know of any proof of their inconsistency.

If God is necessarily righteous, and God always wills that creatures should do what, all things considered, He prefers that they do, then it would seem to follow that there would be no possibility of any creature doing wrong, since God necessarily prefers that they do right. But, if there is no possibility of our doing wrong, then we cannot be freely righteous freely, that we cannot be righteous at all (if human righteousness does presuppose freedom).

Now, it seems that the Thomist has painted himself into a pretty tight corner, because in order for human righteousness to exist, it must exist contingently in its circumstances, but, given the Thomist's account of divine providence, it seems that human righteousness must always be necessary in its circumstances, since how could God will otherwise?

But, God recognizes the importance of human freedom, which entails the contingency of human righteousness, so there must be something He can do to secure that contingency.

Human righteousness requires freedom, freedom requires circumstantial contingency, and this sort of contingency requires the existence of chance in the world (in van Inwagen's very precise sense of "chance"). So, to create real human righteousness, God must introduce an element of chance into the world.

The open theist can locate this chance within the created world, or in the interface between God and the world (as described in van Inwagen's "The Place of Chance in a World Sustained by God"[10]). The Thomist can't locate chance in those places, because God's decrees can't be indeterminate or open-ended as they are according to van Inwagen. So, the Thomist must locate chance within God's will. There has to be a self-fragmentation of God's will into billions of pieces, a self-imposed incoherency within God's will.[11] This may come about through some kind of self-imposed deontic constraint: a kind of divine vow not to coordinate His acts of willing in certain ways. For example, in deciding what to will about a given creatures actions, not to take into account God's own all-things-considered preferences, but rather to take into account only those considerations that bear relevantly on the choice from the creature's point of view. God's actions can be incoherent in much the way that the various actions of a person who spends part of his time carrying out certain fiduciary obligations. Imagine, for example, a person who personally hates post-impressionism but who has accepted the role of

[10] In *Divine and Human Action*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988), pp. 257-280.

[11] Oxford theologian Austin M. Farrer proposed such a view of God's will in several of his later works, especially *Faith and Speculation* (New York University Press, 1967) and *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited* (Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1961).

executor of the estate of a friend who bequeathed a large share of his fortune for the support and promotion of this very school of art. The executor's actions, sometimes supporting such art and other times disparaging it, will be genuinely incoherent, due to the conflict between his personal preferences and his fiduciary responsibilities.

God forbade Adam to eat the fruit, and He really meant it. He didn't want Adam to eat the fruit – he strongly preferred that Adam not do so. Nonetheless, a few moments later, God willed that Adam should freely eat the fruit. God's will is incoherent. This is not a case of direct conflict or self-contradiction: God does not will that Adam eat the fruit and that he not eat the fruit. Nonetheless, He did will that Adam eat the fruit, despite His own strong preferences to the contrary, and that is a kind of pragmatic incoherency. But, the incoherency is justified as necessary for the existence of human freedom.

Is this incoherency compatible with divine simplicity? I think so, because the fragmentation occurs at the level of the content or objects of God's willing, not as fracturing of the faculty of willing itself. As I said, God doesn't actually will contradictory things, only incoherent ones. In addition, the incoherency is only temporary. A Christian theist trusts that God's true preferences will ultimately prevail, resolving all creaturely recalcitrance into an ultimate coherency.

Interestingly, this sort of Thomist comes, in the end, very close to the open theist position. Both have a dynamic, view of time and temporal becoming, both deny that God has a comprehensive plan (at least, not as a hard and inalterable fact), and both insist on

the necessity of chance for the presence of freedom. The Thomist, should, I think, agree with the open theist in thinking that the vast majority of counterfactual conditionals of freedom simply have no truth-value, there being no reason for God to indulge in counterfactual decision-making. The differences are these: the Thomist has a God who is simple and impassive, but intentionally incoherent, while the open theist has a God who is complex, receptive, but coherent in His will.